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Abstract

Since the late 1970s, heavy metal music has faced a considerable amount of negative media coverage. Much of this negative media coverage has been observed internationally, and has often lead to moral panics surrounding the music and its fans. These moral panics were often fuelled by concerned parent groups and the religious right, all of whom claimed that heavy metal music was a dangerous influence on young people because of the hidden Satanic messages that it supposedly contained. As a result of these panics, a number of heavy metal artists faced being banned or censored. But has Australia experienced a moral panic involving heavy metal? This research project uses discourse analysis to analyse Australian newspaper content to determine whether a moral panic surrounding heavy metal artists Slipknot and Marilyn Manson has occurred in Australia. While the international news coverage surrounding these two artists suggests that moral panics have occurred elsewhere, I argue that in Australia a classic moral panic has not occurred, but that some ‘mild’ and ‘micro’ panics surrounding these artists have occurred. However, these have not lead to any banning or censoring as a way of protecting young people. I argue that this lack of moral panic has come about because moral panic is now a standardised way of reporting within the media by journalists, and that the Australian news media now understand there is no need to create concern and panic regarding these heavy metal artists.

0.0: 'WELCOME' – AN INTRODUCTION TO HEAVY METAL MUSIC AND MORAL PANIC

Today's young people are surrounded by music, rock music. It is so pervasive that we almost forget it's even there. But make no mistake, it *is* there, too much of it drumming more and more destructive messages into the minds of our children. The average teenager listens to rock music four to six hours daily! That's more hours of rock music than hours of classroom instruction. Unfortunately, in much of that music the message is negative, even harmful (Parents Music Resource Centre fundraising letter cited in Christe 2004: 119).

The music genre of heavy metal has, since the late 1970s, faced a multitude of negative media coverage, and has been the subject of a number of moral panics. Concern about the genre reached a pinnacle point when the religious right and concerned parents groups, like the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC), began to express their concern about the potentially dangerous effects that heavy metal music could have on young people. The rise of interest and pressure groups meant that heavy metal music was attacked from all perceivable angles for its apparent promotion and inspiration of anti-social behaviours amongst young people. But behind all the negative media coverage and all the lawsuits (most famously, the 1988 court case involving Ozzy Osbourne and his song 'Suicide Solution'), heavy metal music has yet to be proven to cause anti-social behaviour, leading a number of academics and heavy metal artists to believe that heavy

metal is instead used within the news media as a scapegoat for *explaining* anti-social behaviours (Walser 1993; Weinstein 1991; Christe 2004; Safe 2000; Koha & Hellard 2007; Shedden 2006; Monk 1999; Stewart 1999; Heywood 1999; *Herald Sun* 1999). Scapegoating has, in some countries, led to heavy metal music being censored or banned. This has often been presented as a way of protecting young people from the dangers that heavy metal music was supposed to present. But has this kind of scapegoating also occurred here in Australia? Concern has been raised as to whether certain artists should be allowed to perform in Australia, but has there been enough negative media coverage to see a heavy metal artist or band being banned from performing in Australia as a way of protecting young Australians? This research aims to discover whether negative media coverage in Australia has led to heavy metal artists Slipknot and Marilyn Manson being banned from performing in the country as a way of protecting Australia's young people.

Heavy metal artists and fans have often been described as evil people, who use heavy metal music to worship the devil. Negative media coverage of the genre and its fans is not uncommon within the news media. Negative reporting is caricatured by Safe:

They're painted as drooling Satanists, purveyors of perversion, destroyers of eardrums- but Australia's metalheads couldn't care less. They're proudly parochial and like their music loud. Of course, know-best grown-ups can't help but tut-tut, as National Party MP Peter Lindsay did recently. He suggested holding metal bands liable for crimes committed while under their influence. How exactly you can prove this link is another matter. Oh the horror of it. All these young, impressionable minds... being corrupted by this depravity (Safe 2000).

For some parents, hearing the names Slipknot or Marilyn Manson may invoke shudders and cringes as they imagine the kinds of negative messages and anti-social behaviours that their children are exposed to when they listen to these artists. Mostly, these shudders of concern and fear have come about because of a multitude of negative media coverage that has surrounded artists such as these since the late 1970s, when heavy metal was first blamed (or used as a scapegoat) for inciting anti-social behaviours in society. Deena Weinstein says that:

Many people hold that heavy metal music, along with drugs and promiscuous sex, proves that some parts of youth culture have gone beyond acceptable limits. To many of its detractors heavy metal embodies a shameless attack on the central values of Western civilisation. But to its fans it is the greatest music ever made (Weinstein 2000: 3).

Weinstein poses an important question, one that also forms part of this research: “Can a form of music that has attracted millions of fans for more than twenty years be all that dangerous?” (2000: 3). While heightened concern surrounding these artists has been observed overseas, the aim of this research project is to determine whether a level of concern similar to this has occurred in Australia to date. To do so, articles from different Australian newspapers were analysed, using a discourse analysis approach, to determine the ways in which Slipknot, Marilyn Manson, and the fans of these artists have been represented in news discourse. By doing so, it was expected that a negative trend in reporting would be observed, showing that heavy metal music has been a source of controversy, and that banning artists like Slipknot and Marilyn Manson would be presented as a way of protecting young people from the supposed dangers that the music

presented. As a result, a review of moral panic literature and heavy metal literature was also undertaken in this research. A project such as this is useful for understanding of media reporting trends: that is to say, whether particular groups or people in society can have their image and credibility tainted because of negative media coverage that may present them as being dangerous or damaging to a society.

Concern surrounding heavy metal artists Slipknot and Marilyn Manson has been abundant overseas. Since the early 1990s, Marilyn Manson has shocked the world with his onstage persona and music. Manson, who's real name is Brian Warner, named himself after Marilyn Monroe and serial killer Charles Manson. In the past, rumours surrounding Manson have been rife with controversy, including rumours that he gives away free puppies at his concerts so that fans can kill them during the concert, and that he had a rib surgically removed so he could perform oral sex on himself (Shedden 1999). With rumours such as these, it comes as no surprise to learn that wherever Manson has gone, controversy soon follows. Manson has been a common feature in American news media for his controversial onstage performances and song lyrics. In April 1999, following the Columbine High School massacre, Manson was blamed for inspiring the massacre after it was rumoured that the student killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, has been fans of Manson's music (Anton 1999).

Slipknot has also come under harsh criticism for the member's appearance and the group's music. Appearing in the heavy metal scene in the late 1990s, Slipknot has caused outrage amongst a number of protest groups for the member's appearance on stage

(Stewart 1999). The nine members of the band (who refer to themselves onstage by numbers 0-8) wear bizarre and sometimes monstrous masks to hide their true identities. Onstage, they perform a number of acts that many parents would cringe at, including having a severed pig's head next to their percussionist (who ironically enough, wears a pig mask). They too have also come under fire for their lyrical content with songs including 'Sic', 'People=Shit', and 'Pulse of the Maggots' ("Maggots" are what Slipknot have affectionately named fans) (Uebergang 2007b). In 2002, the band was blamed for inspiring a high school massacre in Germany after it was discovered that the student killer, Robert Steinhaeuser, had Slipknot music amongst his collection. The band were said to have inspired the massacre with their song *School Wars*, which supposedly included the lyrics "shoot your naughty teachers with a pump gun" (Mohan 2002). However, no such song has ever been written or recorded by Slipknot. With controversy such as this happening overseas, it is anticipated that similar concern and controversy has occurred here in Australia.

0.1: 'LUCI IN THE SKY WITH DEMONS' – AN OUTLINE OF THE THESIS.

Chapter 1 of this thesis consists of two parts: a review of moral panic literature, and a review of heavy metal literature. The review of review of moral panic literature predominantly consists of work by Cohen (1972), Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994), and McRobbie and Thornton (1995). These moral panic theorists have been chosen because they are key scholars and theorists in moral panic theory. Cohen (1972) argues that moral panics are created within a media environment, and that they eventually 'fade', or pass,

so that society once again returns to normal (2002: 1). McRobbie and Thornton (1995), on the other hand, say that Cohen's approach toward moral panic theory is now outdated and in need of revision as it no longer fits in with today's media, who now have a better understanding of the media's role in constructing 'moral panic' (1995: 572). They say the media are now aware of the dangers of a moral panic, and that they now remind their readers or viewers that concern is not always necessary (McRobbie and Thornton 1995: 572).

Heavy metal literature will also come under review. While much popular concern has been raised about the influence heavy metal has on a society, there has been surprisingly little literature on the topic. Perhaps the first to write on the dangers of heavy metal music was Tipper Gore, of the PMRC, who wrote *Raising PG Kids in an X Rated Society* (1987). In this book, heavy metal is attacked as being the main cause for suicide in America, and as being responsible for an increase in Satanism. During the 1980s, literature like this was not uncommon, and it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that analysis of this negative media coverage, along with positive studies on the genre, began to appear. The work of a number of key scholars on heavy metal will be discussed in this research project, including Deena Weinstein (2000), Robert Walser (1993), Keith Kahn-Harris (2007), and Robert Wright (2000). Each of these scholars explains motivations behind heavy metal moral panics.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology chosen for this research project, which is discourse analysis. This method was used to determine whether negative media coverage and stereotyping is at work within the Australian news media in regards to heavy metal

artists Marilyn Manson and Slipknot. Using a discourse analysis, the language that is used by the reporters will be analysed to see whether an attempt to create a moral panic is being made. As key mediators of moral panic, the media industry and the journalists within it have the power to determine how issues are represented, so their choice in language when writing articles about heavy metal artists is an important factor in this analysis.

In chapter 3 the articles from a collection of newspapers from around Australia are analysed in terms of how heavy metal artists Slipknot, Marilyn Manson, and their fans are spoken about within Australian media. For comparative purposes, some international newspaper articles will also be used in the analysis. The chapter is divided into two parts: the first consists of an analysis of articles about Marilyn Manson, paying particular attention to the period of October 1998 through to January 1999 with his performance at the 1999 Big Day Out, while the second part focuses on media coverage of Slipknot dating between February 2000 and September 2007. The articles analysed were chosen for the way they represented the artists. The choice in language used within the articles was analysed as a way of determining whether negative reporting trends are at work within Australian media.

Contrary to expectations, Australia has not, in fact, experienced a genuine moral panic toward heavy metal artists Slipknot and Marilyn Manson, like those that have appeared elsewhere in the world. There have been, however, mini and micro panics towards these artists in Australia, but not *total* moral panics. Between October 1998 and

January 1999, Manson and his appearance at the Big Day Out generated a series of 'mild panics', while Slipknot, over a period of a little over a decade, generated only a few 'micro panics'. This suggests that, as McRobbie and Thornton have also suggested, that the term 'moral panic' is now used within the news media as a form of everyday reporting, and not as a way of identifying and creating concern in both society and the media.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the late 1970s the genre of heavy metal has come under criticism and has at times been constructed as a 'problem' by concerned parent groups, religious groups, and the media. Concerns surrounding the genre have most often been about the potential danger it presents to young people, with some believing that young people may act on the Satanic subliminal messages that are said to be present in the music. For this reason, the 1980s, in particular, saw a number of moral panics surrounding heavy metal music.

1.1: 'ALL HOPE IS GONE' - MORAL PANIC LITERATURE

Central to this research is moral panic theory and how it plays a role in the understanding and subsequent stereotyping of heavy metal music. Stanley Cohen was a key moral panic theorist in the 1970s with the publication of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (1972). This classic work speaks of how moral panics are created and what they involve. Cohen's description of moral panics is as follows:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited

experts pronounce their diagnosis and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges and deteriorates and becomes more visible (Cohen 2002: 1).

This definition shows that moral panics are a constructed threat, and that sociologists study how the perception of threat is constructed. Cohen goes on to say that some panics can be quite novel, and at other times they have been in existence for some time, but suddenly appears as a 'threat' (2002: 1). He describes the way that perceived threats are stereotyped by the mass media, and how these stereotypes often need the 'expertise' of doctors, scientists and so forth to declare that the threat was one that should be taken seriously, and ultimately be solved (or diagnosed) by the relevant 'experts' (2002: 1). Although Cohen was a pioneering sociologist in moral panic theory, his work has subsequently been revised and developed by other sociologists, such as Goode and Ben-Yehuda.

Erich Goode's *Deviant Behaviour* (1978), is about behaviours that society deems as deviant and unacceptable. Goode states that:

In every society that has ever existed, there are rules governing the behaviour of members. Certain actions are regarded as good, acceptable, conventional, in accord with the rules; other forms of behaviour are regarded as bad, unacceptable, unconventional, in violation of the rules and the norm. [People] continually make judgements about the behaviour of others and the individuals who engage in that behaviour (Goode 1984: 3).

To define deviance, says Goode, three general perspectives must be considered: the absolutist, the normative, and the reactive (1984: 7-10). Each perspective on deviance provides a different definition of what deviant behaviour is. Each of these perspectives can be seen to take place within the assessment of heavy metal behaviours, most notably that of the normative perspective, which “locates the quality of deviance not in the actions themselves, but in the fact that they violate the norms of the culture in which they take place” (Goode 1984: 8). Goode has also worked with Ben-Yehuda on moral panic theory as part of the social construction of deviance. Their definition of moral panic is not at all too dissimilar to Cohen’s:

During [a] moral panic, the behaviour of some of the members of a society is thought to be so problematic to others, the evil they do, or are thought to do, is felt to be so wounding to the substance and fabric of the body social, that serious steps must be taken to control the behaviour, punish the perpetrators, and repair the damage (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2002: 31).

Their text, *Moral Panics: the Social Construction of Deviance* (1994), claims that there are five indicators of a moral panic: concern, hostility, consensus, volatility, and disproportionality (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2002: 33-45). With their five criteria, four overlapping territories must also take place: deviance, social problems, collective behaviour, and social movements (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2002: 52-53). When all these criteria and overlapping territories have been met, a moral panic has occurred. While there has been much research into moral panic theory, Goode and Ben-Yehuda say there are still a number of questions that need to be answered. For example, exactly who is it that expresses concern that leads to something being classified as a moral panic? Why are

some panics subculturally and socially localised, and others grip an entire society? Are there certain individuals or groups who are more likely to initiate a moral panic than others (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2002: 51-52)?

While moral panic theorists like Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda seem to lead the way in moral panic theory, others have suggested that approaches to moral panic theory, like Cohen's, are now outdated and in need of revision in order to better understand the society we live in today. Kenneth Thompson (1998) is one such person, as he argues that some of the most practical contributions to moral panics have yet to be fully explained in one framework (1998: 7-11). Thompson also claims that early moral panic theory focused too much on analysing subcultures that were said to cause the panic, rather than the media who were fuelling the panic (1998: 2).

Angela McRobbie and Sarah Thornton have also made such claims when they challenged Cohen's moral panic theory with their paper 'Rethinking 'moral panic' for multi-mediated social worlds' (1995). McRobbie and Thornton first challenged Cohen's moral panic theory because they believed it no longer applied to modern media coverage. While aspects of Cohen's research may still be applicable, McRobbie and Thornton argue that other aspects of the classic theory simply no longer suit modern society (1995: 559-560). For example, McRobbie and Thornton highlight that the term 'moral panic' was once only to describe extreme cases of anti-social behaviour, but the term is now regularly used by journalists to generate interest and debate within the news media, and has become "a routine means of making youth-oriented cultural products more alluring"

(1995: 559). Further reasons for explaining why the term is in need of revision include: the suggestion that the classic folk devil, as described by Cohen (1972), “now produce their own media as a counter to what they perceive as the biased media of the mainstream” (1995: 568); that the media is no longer separable from society because society can now also *be* the media (570-71); and that both the police and the media now show an awareness of the dangers of overreaction toward moral panics (1995: 572). They also suggest that a rise in interest groups, pressure groups, and lobby groups means we can no longer “ignore the many voices which now contribute to the debate during moral panics” (McRobbie and Thornton 1995: 566). For this reason then, moral panics have now become a routinised way for reporting within the media, and they are not always “periods... [that emerge] as a threat to societal values and interests” as Cohen claimed in the 1970s (2002: 1).

1.2: ‘YOU AND ME AND THE DEVIL MAKES 3’ – HEAVY METAL LITERATURE

Since the 1970s, heavy metal music has caused quite a bit of concern and controversy within society. This was especially the case in the 1980s, when moral panics surrounding the music genre and its young listeners began to take place in a number of places around the world. Concern about heavy metal music centred around claims that a number of anti-social behaviours involving young people could be linked to the genre of music. Because of the concern raised, literature on heavy metal has been on the rise since the mid 1980s.

Tipper Gore, who was an activist for the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC), was a key activist in the 1980s for the censorship of heavy metal music. Gore's book, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society* (1987) went straight to the heart of activists who believed that music like heavy metal was a dangerous influence on young people. She devotes two chapters to the discussion of the dangers of heavy metal music: 'The Cult of Violence' with a sub chapter titled 'Heavy Metal: Throbbing Chords and Violent Lyrics', and 'Playing with Fire: Heavy Metal Satanism'. *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society* has since become central to the conservative way of thinking about heavy metal music. Gore says that "many of those who do listen to a great deal of negative music are troubled, and their interest in the music should be a warning sign to adults" (Gore 1987 cited in Wright 2000: 373). She also specifically links heavy metal music with Satanic worship and the occult (Gore 1987: 117-125). The threat to family values and dominant societal values was a concern for Gore and the religious right, who saw the music as a form of rebellion for young people, which in turn upset the traditional balance of family values.

Another prominent critic of heavy metal music was Carl A. Raschke, who attacked heavy metal in his book *Painted Black: From Drug Killings to Heavy Metal- the Alarming True Story of How Satanism is Terrorizing Our Communities* (1990). His book crucifies heavy metal music by defending Christian values, which he presumes everyone shares (Walser 1993: 141). Raschke's attempt at creating a moral panic surrounding heavy metal music was based on sensational claims and 'findings', such as the notion that heavy metal music is the central cause of anti-social behaviours amongst young people,

particularly suicide and teenage pregnancies (Raschke 1990:164). Another sensational claim made by Raschke is that:

Heavy metal is to heavy drug use as lotteries are to compulsive gamblers. The chemically dependent adolescent adopts a life-style of swagger, brutality, theft, and sexual excess- all of which is reinforced by the yowling and bellowing of metal groups (Raschke 1990: 166).

Raschke also claims that the inflammatory message of heavy metal is power, with the power not being religious, but violent - “often the most irrational and uncontrollable violence engineered by the Archfiend himself, whom unsophisticated minds have a hard time identifying as ‘psychodrama’” (1990: 166). Raschke’s claims were so unsubstantiated and false that Walser believes he “misleads his readers in an attempt to whip up a repressive frenzy directed against metal musicians and fans” (1993: 142-3). Raschke is one of the best examples of how moral panics surrounding heavy metal have been created and maintained as many of the claims against heavy metal music were never substantiated with any real evidence.

Deena Weinstein is a prominent researcher in the study of heavy metal music. In her text, *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (1991 revised in 2000 as *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*), Weinstein looks at the fans of heavy metal music, the music itself, and the fear that has encircled heavy metal music for so long. She maintains that this fear of heavy metal music stems from a deep misunderstanding of the rebellious and energetic culture that is heavy metal music. Attacks on heavy metal music have occurred since the 1970s, and Weinstein highlights this in her opening chapter, ‘Studying Metal:

the Bricolage of Culture', citing a number of critics, like Robert Duncan, who described heavy metal music as "dismal, abysmal, terrible, horrible and stupid music, barely music at all. Music made by slack-jawed, alpaca-haired, bulbous-inseamed imbeciles" (quoted in Weinstein 2000: 1), and Baptist minister Jeff R. Steele who's opinion of heavy metal music was that it is "sick and repulsive and horrible and dangerous" (quoted in Weinstein 2000: 1). It is comments like these that have lead Weinstein to suggest that:

The intense loyalty and devotion of its fans is matched by the contempt and loathing for the genre expressed by those who presume to pass judgement on cultural phenomenon. Indeed, it is hard to think of [an]other human phenomena, outside child torture and cannibalism, that evoke such intense abhorrence. Heavy metal polarizes people. Those who are aware of it either love it or hate it (Weinstein 2000: 237).

The idea that heavy metal music embodies everything that society fears is what Weinstein wants to challenge in her text. She says that ideological constructions made by critics of the genre have lead to the negativity that surrounds heavy metal:

[critic's] policy stances toward the "social problem" of heavy metal reflect their ideological constructions of heavy metal rather than what heavy metal is to its fans, the artists who create it, its mediator, or an ethnographer (2000: 239).

The rise of concerned parent groups and the religious right in the 1980s saw the genre constructed as a problem because it went against everything that was 'proper' in society; the genre had men dressed in women's clothing and makeup, saw the sacred images associated with Christianity being ridiculed on stage, rejected conservative family values,

and was sending out apparent Satanic messages of hate and violence in its lyrics for young people to act upon. This concern is what prompted a moral panic to develop.

Robert Walser's *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993) resituates heavy metal music within contemporary debates about music and cultural politics. In his chapter, 'Metallurgies: Genre, History, and the Construction of Heavy Metal', Walser acknowledges what many already know and say about heavy metal: "At best it is controversial; the enthusiasm of metal fan magazines is paralleled by the hysterical denunciation of the mainstream press and smug dismissals of most rock journalism" (1993: 20). One of the most commonly scrutinised aspects of heavy metal music is its lyrical content. The content of metal lyrics has been examined numerous times throughout recent years (most notably with the 1988 court case involving Ozzy Osbourne and his song 'Suicide Solution'). This, along with other issues and controversies that have surrounded the genre, are outlined and discussed in the chapter, 'Can I Play With Madness? Mysticism, Horror, and Postmodern Politics'. Citing some of the most infamous cases of moral panics surrounding heavy metal music (mostly from the 1980s), Walser highlights that these panics mostly came about because heavy metal threatened "shared moral values" that underpinned conservative society (Walser 1993: 138), and could have been avoided had the critics behind them actually considered heavy metal as simply another genre of music rather than as a threat to traditional authority. Underlying in all attacks on heavy metal, though, are that "critics share the notion that heavy metal is bad because it is perverse deviance in the midst of a successful functioning society" (Walser 1993: 144). Walser also acknowledges that many of the panics were

simply blown out of proportion to what was actually happening, and that often this was done with the help of ‘experts’ (Walser 1993: 139).

In 2000 Robert Wright wrote an article for *Popular Music* titled ‘‘I’d Sell You Suicide’: Pop Music and Moral Panic in the Age of Marilyn Manson’. Wright frames all controversies surrounding heavy metal music specifically as moral panics. Wright acknowledges that since the early 1980s music that has been blamed for inciting antisocial behaviour has most often been music that does not fit in with mainstream rock radio. In particular, heavy metal as a genre has been blamed for “foster[ing] social pathologies among listeners ranging from occultism and Satanism, through sexism and racism, to murderous and suicidal tendencies” (Wright 2000: 369-70). Wright also notes that while experts were claiming that suicide rates were on the rise because of dangerous, explicit, and destructive music, “there is nothing in the clinical evidence to support any such link” (2000: 371-2). With the rise of the religious right, and the many legal challenges that are presented, Wright says that criticism of heavy metal music has now become normalised.

With most of the scholarship focusing on heavy metal, Keith Kahn-Harris was one of the first academics to write on extreme metal music. In *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (2007), Kahn-Harris discusses the fears and moral panics that have surrounded heavy and extreme metal, many of which he says were “stimulated by powerful political groups that saw it as a dangerous influence on the nation’s youths” (2007: 27). In the chapter ‘The Scene and Transgression’, Kahn-Harris describes the

controversy surrounding heavy metal in the 1980s as a classic moral panic, calling it a “bete noire for the religious right” (2007: 27). This moral panic, says Kahn-Harris, was stimulated by powerful political groups, indicating once more that the religious right and other such pressure groups were at the centre of the panic that surrounded the genre in the 1980s (2007: 27). Kahn-Harris also mentions the major claims that have been made against metal music, including claims it was a cause of murder, a claim which many Christian groups said was being done through subliminal messages in the lyrics of the songs which were only decipherable when played backwards (Kahn-Harris 2007: 27). Kahn-Harris also looks at the moral panic that happened in the 1990s in Norway following a number of murders and church burnings committed by black metallers.

Moral panics surrounding heavy metal music have also been examined within popular media. Documentaries such as Michael Moore’s *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and Sam Dunn’s *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* (2005) have ventured into areas that some have previously avoided by interviewing heavy metal artists for their perspective on the moral panics that surround them. Following the massacre at Columbine High School in 1999, Marilyn Manson came under criticism for his music because it was believed that the killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, had been fans of Manson’s music (Wright 2000: 381-82). Moore’s documentary, while not specifically about the dangers of heavy metal music to young people, features an interview with Manson. In the interview, Moore asks Manson his thoughts on being blamed for the massacre: “I can definitely see why they would pick me... because I’m... a sort of poster-boy for fear. Because I represent what everyone is afraid of” (*Bowling for Columbine* 2002). Following the massacre at

Columbine High, protest groups around America tried to have Manson banned from performing in their towns or cities because of the “angry, heavy metal subculture” he represented (*Bowling for Columbine* 2002).

Sam Dunn’s love for heavy metal music inspired to him to make a feature documentary about the genre of music, *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* (2005). As an anthropologist and devoted metal head, Dunn wanted to explore the culture of heavy metal (and the tribe that inhabits it - metal heads), and explore the controversies that have surrounded the genre for over 30 years. Interviewing a number of heavy metal artists, including Alice Cooper, Twisted Sister’s Dee Snider, and Slipknot’s Corey Taylor, Dunn touches on a number of important issues surrounding heavy metal music, such as its origins, censorship, death and violence, and fans. Speaking of heavy metal in the 1980s, when it was at its height of controversy, Dunn explains:

Critics thought it was unsophisticated music for unsophisticated people. Religious groups launched their own crusades against heavy metal. They feared it was a vessel for the devil, and had created a satanic epidemic amongst teenagers. And then the lawsuits came. Metal artists were sued for causing kids to commit suicide, or even murder. Heavy metal was the moral panic of the day. And metal fans, they were considered low-lives, dead end kids. The bane of society (*Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* 2005).

Dunn’s documentary goes to the heart of what is controversial about heavy metal and shows that the musicians of this controversial genre don’t always epitomise the evils of society that many claim they do. Commenting on violence in society and how heavy

metal is used as a scapegoat, Dee Snider says the media use heavy metal music to explain why the person is doing what they are (*Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* 2005). Dunn set out to answer why metal has been persistently stereotyped and condemned, and to answer that question Dunn says: "metal confronts what we'd rather ignore. It celebrates what we often deny. It indulges in what we fear most. And that's why metal will always be a culture of outsiders" (*Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* 2005).

While Cohen's moral panic theory is still a classic, and the basis of most studies of moral panic, it has to be said, as McRobbie and Thornton have done, that this theoretical model simply no longer applies to today's society and media, as the media's understanding of moral panic has developed somewhat, and what once constituted as a moral panic is now simply every day news reporting. While moral panics have often been portrayed as something that is negative, Thornton has suggested that moral panics are now something that is desired by many youth cultures (1995: 136). As the understanding of moral panics has changed, so too has the understanding of heavy metal music. Once feared by society, with works such as those by Gore (1987) and Raschke (1990), the genre of music is now better understood through the scholarship of authors such as Weinstein (2000) and Walser (1993). As the literature on heavy metal suggests, society now has a better understanding of the genre, which means less concern and panic now surrounds the genre, its musicians, and its fans.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This project involved a discourse analysis of articles from major News Limited newspapers from around Australia, dating between 1998 and 2007. For this project, discourse analysis has proven useful in analysing language used to describe heavy metal artists Marilyn Manson and Slipknot within Australian news media. The language analysed was written text (as this project was based around print media, and not media platforms such as radio or television), which it was hoped would reveal underlying assumptions and stereotypes surrounding these artists in the way they were mentioned or spoken of within the articles. The project aimed to discover whether a moral panic involving heavy metal music occurred in Australia like in other countries, such as the United States. Australian newspapers used included *The Newcastle Herald* (New South Wales), *The Gold Coast Bulletin* (Queensland), *The Advertiser* (South Australia), *The Herald Sun* (including *The Sunday Herald Sun*) (Victoria), *The Courier-Mail* (Queensland), *The Australian* (national), and *The Daily Telegraph* (including *The Sunday Telegraph*) (New South Wales). An international newspaper was also used as a comparison, *The Sun* (from England). A search of news databases News Text (which contains *only* News Limited newspapers) and the Australia New Zealand Reference Centre was undertaken using search terms such as “Slipknot”, “Marilyn Manson”, “Slipknot and ban”, and “Marilyn Manson and ban”. Using these search terms, a large number of articles were found. These were then examined for representative trends in reporting, searching for those which would fit specifically with the research being

undertaken. Articles that simply mentioned that either artists had a new album or were mentioned in other non-important ways were generally excluded from research, unless they made specific mention about imagery or stereotyped the band in some way.

Selecting articles from News Text resulted in some 272 articles on “Slipknot”, 35 articles on “Slipknot and ban”, an astonishing 597 articles on “Marilyn Manson”, and 70 articles on “Marilyn Manson and ban” being found. Of this, a total of 23 Australian articles, and one international article, were analysed using discourse analysis (9 of these articles were on Slipknot, and 15 of articles were on Marilyn Manson).

Discourses can be understood as different ways of speaking about or understanding a person or topic which can then lead to different understandings or ideologies about that person or topic. Recognising that discourses are critical to the way society is constructed is a recognition that “our social practice in general and our use of language in particular are bound up with causes and effects which we may not be at all aware of under normal conditions” (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Fairclough 1995: 54).

Fairclough highlights that connection between the use of language and the existence of power “are often not clear to people, yet appear on closer examination to be vitally important to the workings of power” (1995: 54). Fairclough encourages us to remember that texts, no matter how small or large they are, contribute to shaping aspects of society and culture (1995: 55). Garrett and Bell (1999) tell us that a blurring of the definition of ‘media’ and ‘discourse’ has lead to a confusion about what media discourse actually is (1999: 2-3):

Language in the modern media cannot realistically be seen in terms of the traditional linguistic distinction between the terms discourse and text, as spoken and written language respectively. Spoken language traditionally entailed a co-present listener who was able to affect the speaker's flow of discourse, but usually spoken language in the media does not allow that (Bell 1991 cited in Garrett & Bell 1999: 2).

With this in mind, we can understand that discourses can differ, according to the institution they are from. The strength of a discourse is often supported by institutions (such as medical or legal) that have the trust of a society behind them. Brown and Yule argue that the context in which a discourse is produced is something that should be taken into consideration (1983: 27). Brown and Yule also argue that language plays an important role in discourse analysis as the analyst is “committed to an investigation of what language is used for” (1983: 1). Keeping in mind that language plays an important role in discourses, Fairclough emphasizes that “a striking feature of news discourse is the way in which it weaves together representations of the speech and writing of complex ranges of voices into a web which imposes order and interpretation upon them” (1995: 77).

Fairclough also highlights that “prominent people” (teachers, doctors, lawyers, and politicians for example) are the reason for discourses being so powerful in the representation of a person or group (1995: 79). This means that prominent people have the power to influence what discourses are presented within the news media, and more importantly, *how* they are presented. This has been taken into consideration in this

research, as in the 1980s groups such as the PMRC, as well as political groups, and religious groups have all used their power within the news media to raise concerns about heavy metal music.

Following the process of discourse analysis, the selected articles were analysed for any media ‘framing’ that may have taken place. Media framing is another common term used within discourses where a person or group are framed in a particular way, most often negatively (Weerakkody 2009: 271). It should be noted that it was not only content within the articles that was analysed, but also the headlines of the articles were also analysed, when relevant. Particular attention was paid to how each of these artists was mentioned within the articles, particularly whether any comments made were stereotypical of how the genre of music was usually spoken of.

There are two key limitations to the research methodology of this project. The first is that the newspaper articles analysed are all owned by News Limited (with the exception of *The Sun*, which has been used as an international example). This has meant that this project does not provide a complete representation of reporting trends in Australia. The second limitation is that all the articles analysed were sourced from online news databases New Text and the Australia New Zealand Reference Centre. This means that only the written text of the articles has been analysed, and not the size of headlines and subheadings, photos, and the placement of the articles on the page. Without being able to view these features of the articles, it makes it hard to present a complete picture of what the news media are saying about heavy metal artists. For example, without the aid

of a picture it is hard to determine how the newspaper is trying to visually portray the artist. Likewise, without being able to see the font size of a headline, it is difficult to determine how the newspaper is placing prominence of the story. Deacon (1999) also makes mention of these limitations, although in regards to content analysis, saying that

Media analysis has long tended to privilege linguistics analysis over visual analysis, and a reliance on digital archives can only compound this tendency, inhibiting understanding of the ways that meanings in popular media texts are created through the interplay between language and image. This is particularly regrettable at a time when the visibility of news has gained significance... through the extensive use of photographs and illustrations, larger dramatic headlines and other creative compositional techniques (1999: 134)

Although this study is only a partial representation of reporting trends, it still shows that media reporting in Australia tends to lean toward a specific writing style, leading to media framing within reporting.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

3.1: ‘MECHANICAL ANIMALS’ – ANALYSING THE NEWS MEDIA

As discussed in Chapter 1, since the late 1970s, and particularly during the 1980s, the genre of heavy metal music has come under criticism because of the apparent danger that it presented, particularly young people. The 1980s saw a moral panic about the genre of music take hold in America, with a number of bands being blamed for anti-social behaviours amongst young people, and bands even going on trial for their apparent influence in anti-social and deviant behaviours like suicide. With panics such as these having occurred across America and in a number of European countries, the following analysis of Australian news coverage of heavy metal artists Marilyn Manson and Slipknot aimed to discover whether a similar moral panic also occurred here in Australia.

Contrary to expectations, the following articles show that Australia has not experienced a true moral panic involving the music genre of heavy metal, at least not on level that other countries such as America have experienced. The following 24 articles (23 from Australian newspapers and one from an international newspaper) show that while there has not been a panic involving heavy metal music, there have certainly been failed attempts to create such panics. Many of the articles refer to the artists using stereotypical phrases to describe their appearance both in person and onstage, their behaviour, and their music. Commonly used phrases include “the world’s most notorious shock rocker” (Waugh 2003) and “gothic” (*The Gold Coast Bulletin* 2007) in relation to

Marilyn Manson, and “heavy metal freak show” (*The Sun* 2002) in relation to Slipknot. Claims that heavy metal music is a dangerous influence on young people have for the most part been made by concerned parents groups and religious groups, many of which claim that heavy metal artists are implanting hidden Satanic messages into the minds of young people (*The Advertiser* 1999a; *The Advertiser* 1999b). However, it was discovered that Australia has yet to experience a true moral panic surrounding either Slipknot or Marilyn Manson. It can be said that Manson created what might be called a ‘mild’ or panic between October 1998 and January 1999, but this did not escalate into a true moral panic. On the other hand, Slipknot caused only a ‘micro’ panic, with some awareness and some concern surrounding the band. This is because the term ‘moral panic’ is now commonly used in news reporting, and that the media now has a better understanding of the consequences of creating a moral panic (McRobbie and Thornton 1995: 572). Another suggestion as to why a true moral panic surrounding heavy metal music has not occurred in Australia is that the religious right have less power in Australia than elsewhere in the world, like the United States (as discussed in Chapter 1). An example of this is the concern Fred Nile attempted to raise. Nile has been the most prominent religious figure to attempt to ban Manson, however he has been the *only* religious to publicly do so.

3.2: ‘UNKILLABLE MONSTER’ – MARILYN MANSON IN THE MEDIA

Of the two artists examined at in this research, Marilyn Manson has caused the most concern in Australia. Manson has made appearances in Australia promoting his albums, and also performed at the Big Day Out (BDO) music festival in 1999. While it would seem that controversy has followed Manson wherever he goes (which seems to be the case elsewhere in the world, particularly in the United States), the articles analysed suggest that this has not happened in Australia. What they suggest is that concern about Manson’s ‘dangerous influence’ on young people really only reached ‘mild panic’ levels after the announcement that Manson would be performing at the BDO in January 1999. Prior to this, Manson had toured Australia in 1996 on his *Antichrist Superstar* tour, where there were no negative incidents to report, and no negative media attention was given to Manson (Adams 1999). There was heightened awareness of Manson and his music following the Columbine High School massacre in April 1999, where it was said that the students involved were listeners of Manson’s music. When Manson was announced as a performer for the 1999 BDO, some concern was raised. For example, the Reverend Fred Nile was amongst the strongest protesters of Manson being allowed to perform at the BDO. Labelling Manson as being “very blasphemous”, Nile campaigned to have Manson banned from performing in Australia, yet when asked why he showed no concern about Manson performing in 1996 he says “I didn’t know about him then” (quoted in Adams 1999).

The Australian news coverage of Marilyn Manson was in some ways similar to the international coverage, however the ‘panic’ surrounding Manson is significantly heightened internationally, especially the American news coverage following the Columbine High massacre. After being accused of inspiring the massacre with his music, articles about Manson in the US exploded into print. The panic that surrounded Manson following the massacre was something that Robert Wright discusses in his paper, ‘I’d Sell You Suicide’: Pop Music and Moral Panic in the Age of Marilyn Manson’ (2000). Once the panic had been established, Wright says Manson

inadvertently achieved a level of infamy in the United States that even he has not anticipated... Manson was thrust to the forefront of an almost unprecedented media frenzy, becoming... ‘the poster boy for everything that is bad in the world’ (2000: 381)

Within hours of the massacre, the Associated Press had created what would be the defining portrait of the killers, that they were part of the Trench Coat Mafia, who “kept to themselves and follow[ed] shock rocker Marilyn Manson” (Wright 2000: 381). The depiction of Manson was used in the majority of reporting surrounding the massacre and ultimately leads to many negative stereotypes being created around Manson. Manson later wrote a letter to *Rolling Stone* magazine saying that American society should have been critiqued for the massacre and not him:

We’re the people who sit back and tolerate children owning guns, and we’re the ones who tune in and watch up-to-the-minute details of what they do with them. This kind of controversy does not help me sell records or tickets, and I wouldn’t want it to. I’m a controversial artist, one who dares to have an opinion and bothers

to create music and videos that challenge people's ideas in a world that is watered-down and hollow (Manson 1999 quoted in Wright 2000: 382).

Manson is attempting to establish that his music was being used as a scapegoat for the massacre, yet this did not calm the panic surrounding his music. This can be seen in the Australian news coverage of Manson as he prepared to perform at the Big Day Out in January 1999, and following the Columbine High massacre in April 1999.

After the tragic massacre at Columbine High School in April 1999, concern about a 'Columbine-like' event happening in Australia was raised after a number of Australian schools discovered some students (who were said to be Manson fans) plotting against their fellow students and teachers. In June 1999, *The Australian* reported that the New South Wales Education Department was monitoring 12 students who had been suspended from school after making death threats against other students and teachers (Nason 1999). At another New South Wales school, a teenage boy who was reported to have posted the names of 24 enemies he wanted to kill at school (Nason 1999). It is interesting to note that prior to Columbine, events such as these were scarcely reported on in Australian news media. However, after the events at Columbine, a number of articles were written in Australian newspapers about the possibility of a 'Columbine-like' event happening in Australia. Also interesting to note is that in such stories Manson was always mentioned. For example, in Nason's piece we are told of students at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School being suspended for compiling a "massacre list": the four students suspended were said to be in a Marilyn Manson-inspired gothic band (Nason 1999).

However, the Australian media coverage of Marilyn Manson was, prior to 1999, not as negative as originally expected. When Manson toured in 1996, there was no negative media coverage about his tour. It was not until late 1998 and early 1999 when it was announced that Manson would appear at the 1999 BDO that concern about the artist reached what might be considered a ‘mild panic’ stage. This mild panic was fuelled by public figures, such as Gold Coast Mayor Gary Baildon, who tried to have Manson banned from performing at the BDO on the Gold Coast, and the Reverend Fred Nile, who claimed in a number of articles that Manson was going to use the BDO to recruit new members into the Church of Satan, of which Nile claimed Manson was a high priest. These two figures seem to have been the only ones who sought to create real awareness and concern about Manson in the summer of 1998/1999. These next few articles analysed highlight the panic that Baildon and Nile tried to create about Manson’s visit to the country, and his performance at the BDO.

A total of 15 News Text articles were found relating to Manson facing a ban at the 1999 BDO. These 15 articles featured either Fred Nile or Gary Baildon making comments on wanting to ban Manson from performing at the BDO. The articles date between the 23rd of October 1998 and the 30th of January 1999, making for just over three months of media coverage of the event (from the time the BDO line up was announced, to the final day of the music festival). The first of these articles, ‘Mayor vows to exorcise rock demon’ (Bartsch 1998) gives the idea that Marilyn Manson is someone who we should associate with the devil and Satanic worship, as the writer has said that Gold Coast Mayor, Gary Baildon, vows to “exorcise” (a word commonly associated with the

banishment of demons in the Christian faith) Manson from performing on the Gold Coast. To use the word “exorcise” demonstrates that Manson is a person connected with the devil and Satanic worship. Bartsch’s description of Manson is also stereotypical of the artist, as Manson is described as “freakish”, a “contrived rock demon”, and in the most commonly used phrase to describe Manson, a “shock rocker” (Bartsch 1998). Baildon’s opinion of Manson is also one that attempts to create concern and panic about Manson:

[the band’s] track record of... controversial performances speaks for itself. The lyrics of their songs make reference to murder, suicide, hate and violence. I believe the majority of parents would not want their children exposed to these themes (quoted in Bartsch 1998).

Baildon’s central argument for wanting Manson banned from the BDO was that Manson and his music did not fit in with, and would therefore threaten, the city’s family image and values (Bartsch 1998). He also believed that residents who lived near the venue where the music festival was held would be exposed to “the band’s disturbing lyrics”, going on to say that “the band’s reputation hardly complements the family image of the Gold Coast” (quoted in Bartsch 1998). The concerns raised by Baildon are specifically identified as attempts to create moral panic in one of the news articles. This is identified in the article ‘A Day Out to remember’ (Zwar 1998). Zwar cites the *Courier-Mail*’s Ali Lawlor as saying that “the moral panic over Marilyn Manson mimics the reactions of the earlier generation of parents to Alice Cooper, Elvis Presley and Kiss” (quoted in Zwar 1998). McRobbie and Thornton (1995: 572) demonstrate reluctance by the news media to use the term “moral panic” to describe concern, as using the term within reporting would

suggest a degree of reflexivity regarding the media's role in constructing moral panics. With the term only mentioned once, this suggests that the Australian news media feel no heightened concern regarding Manson is necessary. Other articles were also written as a response to Baildon's attempts to have Manson banned from the BDO. A short piece from October 1998 highlights that local fans of Manson were outraged to hear the artist might be banned from performing because of the Gold Coast Mayor (*Courier-Mail* 1998).

The concern surrounding Manson throughout these articles appears to be along similar lines to what the *Courier-Mail* had to say:

American shock-rocker Marilyn Manson, to appear at the Gold Coast next week, has alarmed parents and religious groups with his anti-social lyrics and provocative acts. Anti-Manson campaigners claim his music promotes teen suicide, drugs and Satanism (1999a).

While Manson's threat to the family image of the Gold Coast was what Baildon was concerned about, Nile's concerns were typical of those that have surrounded Manson elsewhere. Music, such as that that Manson creates, has for sometime now been associated with the devil and Satanic worship. Labelling Manson as an evil influence on society, and even saying that his performance at the BDO was Manson's way of recruiting more members into the Church of Satan, the Reverend Fred Nile used the BDO as a reason to launch his own attack on the artist (Dougherty 1999). Nile was so fearful of the evil onstage performance of Manson that he said other rock bands, like Alice Cooper and Kiss, "have always had gimmicks like pulling chicken's heads off and other things.

But this guy [Manson] is not theatrical, he is real, he's fair dinkum" (quoted in Monk 1999). Nile was not the only religious figure trying to stop Manson's performance at the BDO. As an organised attack on Manson, and as a way of protecting unsuspecting young people from the dangers that Manson was supposedly going to impose, the Christian group The Festival of Light attended all five of the Australian BDO music festivals to hand out pamphlets warning people about Manson's evils (*The Advertiser* 1999b). The pamphlets handed out carried a message reading:

Beware! Do not let Marilyn Manson get into your head. He has a hidden Satanic message and the agenda to recruit you to worship Satan, the Prince of Evil
(quoted in *The Advertiser* 1999b).

While Nile was not associated with The Festival of Light, his moral campaign against Manson was not at all too dissimilar, after he accused then Prime Minister, John Howard, of failing to show "moral leadership" when he did not ban Manson from entering Australia (quoted in *The Advertiser* 1999b). Nile even went so far as to say that Manson is "more dangerous to Australian children than right-wing British historian David Irving", who denies that the Jewish Holocaust ever happened (Webber 1998; McDonald 1999).

While public figures Gary Baidon and Fred Nile attempted to create a moral panic about Marilyn Manson their attempts were unsuccessful. Not all journalists at the time believed that Manson was out to cause trouble in Australia. In fact, some used their written power within Australian news to remind Australians that Marilyn Manson was just another music 'fad' that was taking hold over the nation's young people, much like

Elvis and the Beatles once did. Iain Shedden, of *The Australian*, was one such writer who reminded Australians that Marilyn Manson was just another music fad:

He's not the antichrist, he's just a very naughty boy, yet those of you following the life of Brian Warner- better known as rock singer Marilyn Manson- could easily be forgiven for thinking that to let this monster into the country, never mind your home town, would lead to the undermining of civilisation as we know it, the corruption of youth and, worst of all, a sudden shortage of puppies in the neighbourhood (he kills them, you know). Manson does not pose a serious threat to humanity, any more than Elvis Presley, Johnny Rotten, or any number of rock stars who have thrust pelvises or erect digits in the general direction of the establishment over the years. *He's just the latest in a long line of entertainers whose modus operandi requires that he be confrontational* (Shedden 1999) [emphasis added].

Shedden dispels the rumours that surround Manson (such as that he gives away free puppies at his concerts so fans can kill them), and says that believing everything that is presented in and by the media is nonsense. It should also be noted that Shedden refers to Manson as a "rock singer", rather than the all too familiar "shock rocker" which is used in almost every article about Manson.

The Courier-Mail's Sue Monk was another writer who informed Australians that the mild panics surrounding Manson would also fade into Australian history eventually, just like other panics surrounding musicians in the past had done. Monk questions whether Manson is any worse than other 'shock rockers' who have come to Australia in

previous years. Previous acts to visit Australia, including Alice Cooper, Kiss and the Sex Pistols, have all been accused of corrupting young people- was Manson any different? The article quotes Dr Karen Brooks, who attributes the controversy to one thing- generational gaps:

I think every generation offers somebody who is ridiculed by the mainstream for moral horror who teenagers or young people will follow...Johnny Rotten and the whole Sex Pistols phenomenon was ripe in the '70s in the punk movement and Marilyn Manson is just the Sid Vicious of the '90s to a degree (Brooks quoted in Monk 1999).

And much like other writers at the time, Monk says that trying to ban Manson, and giving him so much negative media attention, only fuels the problem further (1999). That is, by giving him the media attention, the young people of Australia are being presented with the thing that is apparently bad for them, by the people who are actually trying to protect them from this bad thing.

What these articles demonstrate is that while other countries have faced moral panics surrounding Marilyn Manson, his music, and its supposed influence on young people, the same did not happen in Australia. Although attempts to ban Manson entering the country were unsuccessful, there was some heightened awareness of Manson. His presence in Australia, and concerns that were raised about Manson following the Columbine massacre, means that a level of mild panic was reached. What this may suggest is that Australian news media are now reluctant to use the term "moral panic", as using the term within reporting would demonstrate their active role in constructing moral

panics was suggested by McRobbie and Thornton (1995). It could be said that ‘mild’ panics have occurred in Australia regarding Manson, but a moral panic on the scale described by Cohen has, to date, not occurred.

3.3: ‘PEOPLE=SHIT’ - SLIPKNOT IN THE MEDIA

Compared to Marilyn Manson, Slipknot has not received as much media attention in Australia. Like Manson, Slipknot also performed at the BDO. But unlike Manson, the nine piece band from Iowa received little negative media attention. Nor did they face being banned from performing, or accusations of recruiting young people into the Church of Satan. There were people who were concerned for the young people attending the BDO while Slipknot performed on stage, but this never reached even the level of mild concern that media coverage of Manson reached. In fact, in comparison with Manson, Slipknot has had almost no media coverage to speak of. Common ground that both Slipknot and Manson share, however, were stereotypical ways of describing the band. In the articles found on News Text and the Australia New Zealand Reference Centre, the band were referred to as “news freaks” (Johnson 2000), “nu-metal’s masked crusaders” (Stewart 2004), and even the “contemporary Kiss” (Stewart 2004). Reading articles dating between August 1999 and May 2010 (a period of just under ten years), it seems that Slipknot have received a mixture of media coverage in Australia, ranging from their burst onto the heavy metal scene in 1999, their performance at the 2005 BDO, through to a 2007 murder trial. This variation in media coverage between Marilyn Manson and Slipknot was significantly different, with almost no panics surrounding Slipknot having occurred in Australia to date.

International media coverage of Slipknot has been significantly more prone to moral panic than media coverage in Australia. The most interesting case was Slipknot's implication in a German high school killing spree in 2002. A newspaper article from *The Sun* in England following the incident has been analysed. The events were also retold in a brief account in Ian Christie's *Sound of the Beast: the Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (2004).

The following article, written by *The Sun*'s journalist, Dominic Mohan, is typical of international media coverage surrounding Slipknot. The article describes how, in 2002, 19-year-old German high school student, Robert Steinhaeuser, shot dead 13 people in his school, including teachers, students, and a police officer. After an investigation into the massacre, it was discovered that Steinhaeuser listened to Slipknot's music. Consequently, the band was blamed for inspiring the massacre with a song they supposedly wrote. "The band's song, *School Wars*, was found in his [Steinhaeuser's] collection. Its lyrics include: 'shoot your naughty teachers with a pump gun'" (Mohan 2002). Based on the finding of Slipknot music in Steinhaeuser's collection, the band was blamed for the massacre. What is of greatest interest in this piece is that *School Wars*, supposedly written and performed by Slipknot, does not exist. It was never determined who started the rumour that Slipknot had recorded *School Wars*, but this was evidence that artists like Slipknot are commonly used as scapegoats to explain anti-social behaviours.

After the killings in Germany, there were fresh calls to have Slipknot banned as a way of preventing anti-social behaviour in young people. Ian Christie wrote briefly on the

massacre and Slipknot's apparent involvement. Christe explains that with popularity comes the expected public attacks, and ultimately, scapegoating (2004: 330). Although only very brief, Christe's account of how Slipknot defended themselves following the accusations is interesting, as he uses a quote from Slipknot themselves:

We have never written a song called *School Wars*, we would never encourage people to kill others. We are a blanket of hope for our kids [the fans], not a scapegoat for attacks like this (Slipknot quoted in Christe 2004: 330).

Christe focuses on the public attacks that the band faced. Following the massacre, Christe says the "media critics fingered Slipknot's lyrics as a cause" (2004: 330). Christe's word choice in how the band were blamed (they were "fingered"), almost gives a feeling that they were literally finger printed (at least their lyrics were) and pointed at as suspects into why the massacre happened. This then sets up the subsequent scapegoating that occurred surrounding the band.

In contrast, Australian media coverage of Slipknot has demonstrated little evidence of heightened concern, let alone moral panic. Most of the news coverage of Slipknot in Australian newspapers was about their performance in the 2005 BDO, albums it has released, and the death of the band's bass player in May of this year. It should be noted that articles such as these generally did not attempt to construct Slipknot as a 'problem' to Australian society. However, some recurring themes can be seen in the Australian coverage that is similar to that seen in the overseas coverage. Most commonly, this was in the form of language and words used to describe the band. For example, "violent and misogynist lyrics" (McMahon 2000), their music referred to as "an unholy

cacophony of percussion, guitars and turntables, with lyrics drawn from... [a] darker place” (Johnson 2000), and the description of their stage resembling a “savage stage show... [a] rock ‘n’ roll hell, complete with 666 signs, pentagrams, flames and a goat’s head dripping in blood” (Hughes 2001). This choice in language used to describe Slipknot indicates that some concern surrounds the band. The description of what appears on stage at a Slipknot concert fuels beliefs and assumptions that the band is to be associated with evil things. Highlighting negative aspects, such as these, again indicates that some concern about the band was raised, but that this never amounted to anything more than distress.

Something that was noted amongst these articles, however, was that despite some negativity, there was no push to ban Slipknot from performing in Australia, unlike in the news coverage of Marilyn Manson. While some concern was raised when the band was announced as an act for the 2005 BDO, the concern was only minimal, and related mainly to the dangers that could threaten young people in the mosh pit as Slipknot performed (*The Daily Telegraph* 2005). With the announcement of Slipknot performing at the BDO, there were no calls from religious groups to have them banned, no political figures trying to have the band’s visas denied, in contrast to what was seen with Manson. The focus of most of the news articles was the lyrics, whether the band’s lyrics were simply mentioned in the story, or whether there was actually a story about the potential influence of lyrics on young people. McMahon (2000) wrote one such article that looked into hatred in young people being fuelled by violent lyrics. While the article, ‘Rap fuels teenage hatred’, was not written specifically about Slipknot, it does still make mention of the

band as being “a parent’s nightmare when it comes to teaching teenagers values and decency” (McMahon 2000).

Several negative articles were written that suggested that Slipknot and their fans were something to be feared. The first was written following a Slipknot CD signing in Sydney’s Sanity Pitt Street mall store. The group of fans began to act violently as bottles were thrown and people began crowd surfing. It is interesting to note how the band’s fans (known as Maggots by Slipknot) were spoken of in the article, and what this does for the image of both the band and their fans. The article, ‘Band’s rowdy fans mob mall’ (*The Sunday Telegraph* 2000), begins with the stereotypical imagery of the band’s fans. By labelling the fans as being a “rowdy mob”, the fans have also had an angry image attached to their persona. The opening lines of the article have also created a negative image of Slipknot fans:

A thousand rowdy heavy metal fans threw bottles and crowd-surfed in the Pitt St mall early yesterday as they tried to get autographs from the US band Slipknot.

Police and security staff formed a human barrier outside the Sanity record store just after midnight, fearing a possible riot (*The Sunday Telegraph* 2000).

By highlighting that there were a thousand “rowdy heavy metal fans”, this line has not only tainted the image of Slipknot fans, but also links rowdiness with heavy metal. Using the word “rowdy” implies that anger was a defining feature of the fans. Also, speaking of police and security implies that the fans needed to be watched over, that they were not to be trusted on their own. Mention of how the fans looked was also stereotypical of the genre: “The fans- some dressed in Slipknot shirts, chains and boots, with an array of body

piercings and coloured hair- pushed and shoved to get to the shop's entrance" (*The Sunday Telegraph* 2000). We must wonder why the appearance of the fans was added into the article- was it possibly acting as a warning sign, that if you see someone who fits this description, they are a heavy metal fans, and that they are potentially rowdy or dangerous? This will never be known, but it does seem that this is what is implied.

The next articles were written in 2005 following the BDO. Like Manson, there has not been a true moral panic to Slipknot in Australia. However, while there was no concern about the dangers Slipknot's music posed to young people attending the music festival, if there was concern about the safety of young people at the BDO while Slipknot performed, as an article from the *Herald Sun* highlighted: "by mid-afternoon police and security said the crowd had been well behaved, but mosh-pit injuries were expected to increase after masked metal act Slipknot took the stage" (*Herald Sun* 2005). While this article does not negatively portray Slipknot as explicitly causing trouble, it still highlights that extra security would be needed during Slipknot's performance. While security at music festivals is a given, the need for security was only mentioned in relation to Slipknot's performance, and not for any other act, suggesting that either the band or the fans might cause problems. The third article, this time about a Slipknot fan at the BDO, creates a stereotype that Slipknot fans are "testosterone-fuelled trouble makers" (*Daily Telegraph* 2005). The article specifically targets a Slipknot fan, and even goes to lengths to describe what he looked like and how he was behaving:

His face contorted in anger and screaming while he beat his head and chest, the Slipknot fan was clearly distressed at being ejected from the mosh-pit. A group of

teenage girls... giggled as they watched the American hard rockers dressed in horror clown masks scream and thump their way through a relatively unintelligible set. In his pumped-up state, the Slipknot fan mistakenly thought their laughter was directed at him and stormed over to one of the girls, growling and menacingly standing millimetres from her face. *It was a snapshot of how testosterone-fuelled troublemakers are spoiling the fun for everyone* [emphasis added] (*Daily Telegraph* 2005).

This article, then, gives an impression that Slipknot fans are male and that they are all testosterone-fuelled, which potentially can lead to dangerous things happening.

Perhaps the most negative news coverage surrounding Slipknot was written in 2007, by *Herald Sun* reporter Kate Uebergang. Uebergang wrote two articles, which featured in the *Herald Sun* on the 27th and 28th of September 2007, about the stabbing murder trial of John McKenzie. The style of writing, and the words chosen, suggests that listening to heavy metal music poses as a potentially dangerous threat to some people. In December 2006, McKenzie stabbed his friend to death. During the trial, the court heard that McKenzie “was a fan of bands such as Insane Clown Possie, Slipknot and Mudvayne... [and that he] read books about infamous serial killers and kept stories of True Crime magazines in his toilet” (Uebergang 2007a; Uebergang 2007b). It was also said that McKenzie had compiled a list of people he wanted to kill in Australia, had downloaded lyrics to Slipknot’s ‘Wait and Bleed’, and that hand written notes containing the lyrics to ‘Sic’, also a song by Slipknot, were found in the rubbish of McKenzie’s unit (Uebergang 2007b). While listening to Slipknot was never explicitly blamed for the

murder, nor was it linked as being an inspiration for McKenzie to commit the murder, mentioning that McKenzie was a fan of Slipknot was a feature of both articles. Both articles highlighted the Slipknot lyrics that McKenzie had hand written, which included the lines “I’m sick of it, you’re going down, this is a war” (Uebergang 2007a; Uebergang 2007b). Most importantly, one of the articles (Uebergang 2007a) mentioned *only* Slipknot as a band that McKenzie listened to, while the other (Uebergang 2007b) mentions Slipknot, as well as Insane Clown Possie and Mudvayne. It should be noted that although McKenzie listened to what might be described as ‘violent music’, neither of the articles expressed concern that artists like Slipknot should either be banned or censored from young people as a way of protecting them from dangerous anti-social behaviours.

With little media coverage such as this, it seems almost impossible that a true moral panic surrounding Slipknot and Australia’s young people could ever occur, because there has been little sustained concern about the band, despite some occasional moments of concern. While Marilyn Manson brought with him a ‘mild panic’, Slipknot has had such little effect on the media, it could be said there may have been a ‘micro panic’ involving the band, but nothing more. There have been no calls to ban Slipknot CDs, no calls to ban them from entering the country, and there have been no calls to ban them from performing in the country. As McRobbie and Thornton (1995) have shown, today’s media now have a better understanding of the consequences of creating moral panics. For this reason a true panic has not occurred. This then shows that Slipknot are seen as posing almost no threat to the way young Australian are brought up, and that they

are not seen to threaten societal values in Australia, at least not on the levels that Manson was believed to.

The articles that have been analysed show that Australia has yet to experience a true moral panic, as described by Cohen (1972), concerning heavy metal artists Marilyn Manson and Slipknot. While a moral panic toward these artists has not occurred, it can be said that ‘mild’ and ‘micro’ panics have perhaps occurred instead. A suggestion as to why the ‘mild panics’ were unique to Manson is that Manson had the attention of public figures such as Fred Nile and Gary Bardon, who despite their attempts, failed to create a moral panic about Manson’s performance at the 1999 BDO. Perhaps this also indicates that the role of the religious right in Australia is relatively small in comparison to that seen elsewhere in the world. Slipknot also performed at the BDO, but in 2005, and did not have the same level of negative attention as Manson did, at least not from prominent public figures like Nile and Bardon. Again, this indicates that the role of the religious right in Australia is only small. The lack of moral panic surrounding these artists can be summarised in the work of McRobbie and Thornton (1995), who suggest that the term “moral panic” is in need of revision for a number of reasons: the term is now commonly used within the media (1995: 559); folk devils are now less marginalised, and even produce their own media as a counter to biased media coverage (1995: 559 & 568); the media is no longer separable from society (1995: 570); and most importantly, both the police and the media now have an understanding and an awareness of the dangers of overreaction and moral panics (1995: 572).

‘EVERYTHING ENDS’ – CONCLUDING THE THESIS

This research project has looked at the Australian media coverage surrounding heavy metal artists Slipknot and Marilyn Manson, in order to determine whether there has been a true moral panic surrounding these artists. At the beginning of this research, it was anticipated that due to the moral panics, concerns, and controversies that have surrounded these artists overseas, a similar reaction would have occurred here in Australia, and that following this, bans or restrictions might have been imposed on these artists as a way of protecting Australia’s young people. However, this was not the case. What was discovered was that no such moral panic has, to date, occurred in Australia involving either Slipknot or Marilyn Manson. To understand why a panic has not yet occurred in Australia, first it is important to reflect on the original definition of the term, and the problems this represents within news media today.

Stanley Cohen (1972) was amongst one of the first sociologists to use the term ‘moral panic’. In his classic moral panic text, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: the Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (1972), Cohen defines a moral panic as being an “episode, person or group... [that] emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests” (2002: 1). This ‘problem’ is envisaged as a problem by the media, who expose it to the world. Then, the appropriate ‘experts’ who can deal with the problem solve it so that it “submerges and deteriorates”, and society can once again return to normal (Cohen 2002: 1). But as McRobbie and Thornton (1995) have argued,

this model of moral panic theory simply no longer applies to modern society. They argue that the term “moral panic” was once only used in extreme cases of describing anti-social behaviours, but it is now regularly used by journalists who are also aware of the dangers of overreacting to a moral panic (McRobbie & Thornton 1995: 559 & 572). For this reason, a true moral panic surrounding Slipknot and Marilyn Manson has not yet occurred in Australia. Only ‘mild’ and ‘micro’ panics have occurred. This emphasises McRobbie and Thornton’s idea that overreaction towards these artists was not necessary, but that they were still creating some concern. For example, the concerns that Fred Nile and Gary Baildon tried to build into a moral panic around Marilyn Manson did little except create good news coverage for Manson in his build up to performing at the 1999 Big Day Out. However, the concerns raised by Nile and Baildon did result in a little bit of panic and concern, which is why I use the term ‘mild panic’ to describe the events of October 1998 through to January 1999. While Nile and Baildon tried their best to create a full moral panic about Marilyn Manson and his music at the BDO, their attempts were thwarted by the Australian news media who have now become savvy about the kind of media strategies used by people like Nile and Baildon to incite panic. Likewise, no moral panic surrounding Slipknot has occurred in Australia. While there has been some concern raised about the band, there have been no explicit attempts to have the band banned from performing in Australia as a way of protecting young people.

While work such as this may not seem overly important to the study of media and communications, it highlights that times are changing within sociological studies of societies. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, when concerns surrounding the lifestyles

of young people were under much criticism, events such as those that have been studied in this research would almost certainly have resulted in a moral panic. However, as times and the news media have changed, the term ‘moral panic’ has also changed. This means that which once would have constituted a moral panic can now simply be something that just ‘happens’ (like teenage pregnancies) which means that no real concern, only mild concern, is raised. This research highlights the importance of understanding how discourses work within the news media, and how they may ultimately affect the representation of a person, group of people, or an issue. This research may also help in the modern understanding of moral panics, if indeed they still exist in the 21st century now that the media have changed the way and context in which controversy is presented.

Further research in this area could productively explore a number of issues are areas that were not studied within this research. Further areas of research include exploring what moral panics *have* occurred in Australia regarding the genre of heavy metal, and how these panics (if indeed there have been any) were dealt with. Such research might also include an analysis of different media platforms (such as radio, print, television, and the internet) to see how heavy metal is portrayed, and once again, aim to determine whether a moral panic has, or is likely, to occur. Another possible area for future research includes analysing a newspaper’s coverage in its entirety to discover whether negative media trends in reporting on heavy metal artists is at work. By doing this, the limitations of this research may be addressed by further work. A final possible avenue of research in this topic might include an analysis and comparison of Australian

and American news coverage from the 1980s when a number of moral panics surrounding heavy metal music occurred.

As this research has shown, Australia has not yet experienced a moral panic, like that described by Cohen (1972), surrounding heavy metal artists Marilyn Manson and Slipknot. However, it can be said Marilyn Manson created some 'mild panics, and that Slipknot created some 'micro panics'. With the assistance of campaigners such as Fred Nile and Gary Baidon, there were attempts to generate full moral panics about these artists. However, perhaps because the Australian news media now have a better understanding of the consequences of overreacting about moral panics, these 'mild' and 'micro' panics never eventuated into a full moral panics. Perhaps this is a sign that one day the term 'moral panic' will eventually fade out of existence as the media, and indeed the people who participate in and consume it, will realise that there is simply nothing to truly be concerned or panicked about. After all, how many Satanists do we see running around Australian streets as a result of listening to heavy metal music?

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